

Amherst Massachusetts

ASSISTANT TOWN MANAGER / FINANCE DIRECTOR

Town Hall
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April 10, 2009

TO: Larry Shaffer, Town Manager
Select Board

FROM: John P. Musante, Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director *JPM*

SUBJECT: Background Information – ATM Articles 2-4, 16, and 17

ARTICLE 2. Transfer of Funds – Unpaid Bills (Select Board)

To see if the Town will, in accordance with Chapter 44, Section 64, of the Massachusetts General Laws, appropriate and transfer a sum of money to pay unpaid bills of previous years.

This is an annual article that allows the Town to pay unpaid bills from a prior fiscal year, if any, for which funds were not already encumbered. As of this date, the Town is not aware of any such bills requiring action by Town Meeting. If no such bills are received prior to Town Meeting, the Finance Committee will move to dismiss this article.

ARTICLE 3. Optional Tax Exemptions (Select Board)

To see if the Town will authorize a maximum additional exemption of up to 100 percent for taxpayers qualifying for exemption under Chapter 59, Section 5, Clauses 17D, 22, 37A, or 41C of the Massachusetts General Laws.

This local option authorizes assessors to reduce property taxes for certain qualifying taxpayers (limited income elderly or blind persons, veterans and surviving spouses). The reduction is in addition to the base amount allowed by the state. The option has been in effect in Amherst since FY 94, the first year for which Town Meeting adopted it. The option must be renewed annually. The total cost to the Town in FY 09 to provide these tax exemptions, including the optional tax exemptions, was \$122,746 in foregone tax receipts. Reimbursement by the state for the base exemptions was \$35,774. The cost to the Town in FY 09 to provide the additional optional tax exemptions was \$45,417. See attachment #1: Memorandum from Principal Assessor David Burgess. The Finance Committee has voted to recommend this article.

ARTICLE 4. Authorization for Compensating Balances
(Select Board)

To see if the Town will accept the provisions of Chapter 44, Section 53F of the Massachusetts General Laws, which authorize the Treasurer to enter into written agreements with banking institutions pursuant to which the Treasurer agrees to maintain funds on deposit in exchange for banking services.

Acceptance of this provision of the Massachusetts General Laws authorizes the Town Treasurer to enter into certain banking agreements that require maintenance of a minimum account balance. These agreements typically offer either higher interest rates or some free services in exchange for maintaining a minimum balance. Town Meeting authorization is required annually because, in effect, funds may be expended for services without an appropriation. The Treasurer bids all banking services and bank service fees and determines which proposals are most advantageous for the Town. It is appropriate to provide the Treasurer with the flexibility to use this type of account. The Finance Committee has voted to recommend this article.

ARTICLE 16. Retirement Assessment
(Select Board)

To see if the Town will raise and appropriate \$3,000,652 for the Hampshire County Retirement System assessment.

The Town, as a member of the Hampshire County Retirement System, pays an annual assessment that covers benefits to current retirees and funding for future retirees. The assessment is based on the payrolls of municipal and library employees as well as non-teaching elementary school employees. The \$3,000,652 to be appropriated in this article is an increase of \$83,643, or 2.9%, from the FY 09 assessment. The Finance Committee has voted to recommend this article.

ARTICLE 17. Regional Lockup Assessment
(Select Board)

To see if the Town will raise and appropriate \$31,323 for the Hampshire County Regional Lockup Facility assessment.

The Town, as a user of the Hampshire County Regional Lockup, pays an annual assessment based on population that covers its portion of the operating costs of the Regional Lockup (the Sheriff's office, the University, and the other communities that use the lockup are the other contributors). The \$31,323 to be appropriated in this article for FY 10 is the same as the amount for FY 09. See attachment #2: Letter from the Hampshire Sheriff's Office. The Finance Committee has voted to recommend this article.

AMHERST MASSACHUSETTS




TOWN OF AMHERST
4 BOLTWOOD AVENUE
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ASSESSORS OFFICE
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MEMO

To: John Musante, Finance Director/Treasurer

From: David W. Burgess, Principal Assessor 

Re: Additional Optional Exemption FY2010

Date: April 2, 2009

In FY2009 we have Personal Exemptions as follows:

	Base Exemption Amt	Total Exemption Including Optional	Difference Cost of Optional Exemption	State Reimbursement
Clause 17(Surviving Spouse)				
12	\$ 2,329.05	\$ 3,689.82	\$ 1,360.77	
Clause 22(Military)				
57	\$30,500.25	\$47,835.37	\$17,335.12	
Clause 37A(Blind)				
11	\$ 5,500.00	\$ 9,112.05	\$ 3,612.05	
Clause 41C(Elderly)				
39	<u>\$39,000.00</u>	<u>\$62,109.19</u>	<u>\$ 3,109.19</u>	<u> </u>
Total	\$77,329.30	\$122,746.43	\$45,417.13	\$35,774.00



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

Hampshire Sheriff's Office

P.O. BOX 7000
NORTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS 01061-7000

2

Sheriff

ROBERT J. GARVEY

Deputy Superintendent

PATRICK J. CAHILLANE

March 11, 2009

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Selectboard
Town Of Amherst
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To Whom It May Concern:

As you know, there is an agreement between the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and local cities and towns to share the operating costs of the Hampshire County Regional Lock-up Facility. Each city/town's assessment was derived from an agreement developed through meetings held between area police chiefs, elected officials, and the Hampshire County Legislative delegation. The agreement is based on the population census of each city or town multiplied by 92 cents.

The Hampshire Sheriff's Office has shared in these costs by providing medical assessments, liability responsibilities for arrestees, court transportation, and personnel for emergency situations. We offer participating police departments the opportunity to complete all booking procedures on the premises, with back up support provided by the Sheriff's staff, as well as the use of the conference room for any necessary meetings. During the past year, there were 1,700 arrestees held in the Regional Lock Up for a total of 2,794 days.

Although the costs to operate the Regional Lockup have increased, the Hampshire Sheriffs Office understands the impact that budget reductions have had, and therefore your FY2010 assessment will remain the same. We look forward to providing this service to your city/town for the upcoming fiscal year. Based on your municipalities population of 34,047, the total amount due for FY10 will be \$31,323. An invoice will be mailed to you in July.

Sincerely,

Maureen Callahan
ADS Admin & Finance